

**MINUTES**  
**UNITED TENNESSEE VETERANS ASSOCIATION (UTVA)**  
**December 3, 2012**

Please view video stream - [http://tnga.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=175&clip\\_id=5678](http://tnga.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=175&clip_id=5678)

**SPEAKERS**

The Honorable William “Dusty” Roden, former Commissioner of Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs  
The Honorable Fred Tucker, former Commissioner of Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs  
Juan Morales, Director, Tennessee Valley Healthcare System  
Ed Harries, Executive Director, Tennessee State Veterans Homes  
Jacquelyn Morales, LCSW, VISN 9-Rural Health Consultant  
Dr. David Baker, Telehealth, Tennessee Valley Healthcare System  
Kathy Massey, CLC, Program Manager, Social Services for Rural Veterans, Tennessee Valley Healthcare System  
Bill Burleigh, Executive Director, Operation Stand Down Nashville, Inc.  
Adrienne Bechel Taylor, US Department of Veterans Affairs, Nashville Regional Office  
Gary Whitlock, Deputy VA Volunteer Services, Mt. Home  
Brian M. Jones, Paralyzed Veterans of America

**UTVA MEMBERS PRESENT**

Dianne Poe, Air Force Sergeants Association  
Fred Poe, Air Force Sergeants Association  
Mary Lee Fielder, American Ex-Prisoners of War  
Warren G. King, Sr., American Ex-Prisoners of War  
Barbara Roberts, American Legion Auxiliary  
Perry Roberts, American Legion  
George Martin, AMVETS  
Frank Forbes, Disabled American Veterans  
Eddie L. Jones, Marine Corps League  
John Furgess, Veterans of Foreign Wars  
Curtis Hudson, Veterans of Foreign Wars  
Barry Rice, Vietnam Veterans of America  
Ralph Land, Vietnam Veterans of America  
Mary Ross, Women Veterans of America, Chapter 20

**TDVA STAFF PRESENT**

Many-Bears Grinder, Commissioner  
Wendell Cheek, Deputy Commissioner  
Yvette Martinez, Assistant Commissioner of Outreach and Communications  
Roger Harrell, Director of Claims

**CALL TO ORDER**

Commissioner Grinder called the meeting to order at 1 p.m. and welcomed everyone with a reminder that there is a link on our TDVA website for UTVA meeting documents, agendas, minutes and reports. In addition our meetings are video streamed and can be viewed through live links 24/7. Members were encouraged to distribute UTVA meeting information to their individual Veterans and local chapters.

## **PROCEEDINGS**

Commissioner Grinder introduced two very distinguished guests, former Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs Commissioners Fred Tucker (1995-2011) and William "Dusty" Roden (1979-1987) after which Commissioner Grinder asked Commissioner Tucker to give the invocation and Commissioner Roden to lead the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Grinder presented to Commissioner Roden a Certificate of Appreciation and a boxed TDVA coin, in appreciation for his excellent service to TDVA and our Veterans, noting his distinction for establishing UTVA during his first year with the department. Commissioner Roden brought greetings noting progress of TDVA including a new cemetery in Knoxville and crediting Commissioner Tucker, former Assistant John Furgess and others for their service in helping Veterans across the State of Tennessee by founding UTVA. He challenged members of all State Veterans organizations to get involved in contributing financially to our State Veterans Homes and Cemeteries to show that Veterans want to help Veterans.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Commissioner Grinder asked for approval of minutes from the last UTVA meeting on September 2, 2012. A motion to approve the minutes was made and seconded. The minutes were approved.

## **BRIEFINGS**

**Tennessee Valley Healthcare System:** Commissioner Grinder called on Juan Morales, Director of Tennessee Valley Healthcare Systems, to give a briefing which was followed by questions and a discussion regarding archiving, number of unique visits, number of women Veterans and CBOCs. Please see attached presentation.

**Tennessee State Veterans Homes:** Commissioner Grinder called on Ed Harries, Executive Director of the Tennessee State Veterans Homes, to give a briefing. Following a video on our TN State Veterans Homes and briefing, Mr. Harries took questions to include eligibility requirements, Board Members and meeting schedules. Please see attached presentation and eligibility requirements.

**US Department of Veterans Affairs VISN 9:** Commissioner Grinder called on Jacquelyn Morales, LCSW, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, VISN-9, Rural Health to give a briefing. Questions were deferred until after other presentations.

**Tennessee Valley Healthcare System:** Commissioner Grinder called on Dr. David Baker, TeleHealth, to give a briefing. Questions were deferred until after other presentations. Please see attached presentation.

**Social Services for Rural Veterans:** Commissioner Grinder called on Kathy Massey, Program Manager, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, to give a briefing. Please see attached presentation.

## **TDVA BUSINESS**

**Commissioner Grinder:** Commissioner Grinder added that the US Department of VA, effective August 1 of this year, began a partnership with existing cemeteries to provide for un-served Veterans with burial options which are VA controlled, operated and maintained at National Shrine standards.

Ms. Jacquelyn Morales responded to a question regarding areas designated as rural and urban. Please see attached definition.

Commissioner Grinder announced that the next meeting will be Tuesday March 5, 2013 and that the new VISN9 director will be invited to present. In addition, prior to the meeting, TDVA will host a luncheon at the TN State Library & Archives Building prior to the meeting for the UTVA representatives and members of the Veterans Caucus of the 108<sup>th</sup> General Assembly which will include a legislative briefing. UTVA representatives will have a chance to talk with the legislators regarding Veterans concerns. A Vietnam War & Korean War projects exhibit has been held over a week so that

members and guests will be able to view it at the time of luncheon. More details regarding the luncheon will be announced later and will be posted on our website.

The only legislation TDVA plans to introduce this upcoming session is legislation which will enable us to build additional state cemeteries. She stated that we want to make sure we're not restricted to one per grand division. She asked that UTVA representatives please encourage legislators to support this legislation.

TDVA had our budget hearing with the Governor last month and had an opportunity to remind Governor Haslam how important our Veterans are. Outsourcing of cemeteries was proposed in order to provide better service to our Veterans. A proposal was made regarding restructuring of our Department to add about 14 new Veterans Benefits Representatives to better assist our Veterans. A proposal was made to start the process to buy grave liners for every burial in our State Cemeteries in order to maintain integrity of those graves. Commissioner Grinder asked the UTVA representatives to encourage legislators to support these items.

Commissioner Grinder announced that the TDVA Annual Reports were recently published and copies were distributed.

Registration for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Women Veterans Summit will begin in January and sponsor forms are available today. She encourages support by everyone and asked that other organizations be informed and sponsorships be obtained.

Wounded Warriors opened an office in downtown Nashville. She stated she has met with them and will invite them to present at UTVA at some future date. They are getting younger Veterans to join and invited UTVA to open ears and arms to the Wounded Warriors Project and see how we can work together and collaborate on all our efforts.

Commissioner Grinder and Assistant Commissioner Don Smith attended the region VA Regional Office Transformation Kick-Off. She stated that Under-Secretary Hickey & VARO Director MacDonald are committed to reduce backlog, reduce paperwork and get things done more quickly. She stated the Department is preparing a briefing to share with CSOs.

Commissioner Grinder thanked all UTVA for the Veterans Day ceremonies they conducted throughout the state and said that she and staff attended many events. She noted that a lot of what we do helps to ensure that the public and our future generations remember that freedom is not free.

**Deputy Commissioner Wendell Cheek:** Deputy Commissioner Cheek announced his excitement about our Memphis Cemetery being chosen for an operation and maintenance grant to realign headstones in Memphis which in begin in January. In addition, the grant includes a grid beam system for the same facility which will begin in April. Deputy Commissioner Cheek also announced that the Governor's Council on Service Members, Veterans and their Families was reconstituted by Executive Order No. 15 as The Governor's Council for Armed Forces, Veterans, and Their Families. The first meeting was held on November 11, 2012 and the next meeting will probably be in late April or May, 2013. This Council will focus on three major areas: suicide prevention, PTSD and employment of Veterans.

**Roger Harrell, Director of Claims TDVA:** Mr. Harrell provided an update on video conferences, local hearings and travel board hearings. Two more travel boards will be conducted this year; two to three travel boards are anticipated per year. He stated that Veterans should be encouraged to sign up for video conferences, as it is easier to get the Veterans on those schedules. New claim forms are now available. The goal is to have claims fully developed when submitted. The 534 EZ is a new form which will process faster. Rather than traveling to Nashville, video conferences will be set up in Memphis & Mt. Home to save transportation time and costs for Veterans. VA Transformation is old school structure and processing to work claims more quickly.

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None

### **TDVA WEBSITE**

Assistant Commissioner Yvette Martinez reviewed the TDVA website and pointed out where the Annual Reports, UTVA scheduled meeting dates, agendas, reports, videos, archived meetings and past UTVA information can be found. She encouraged UTVA to share this information with their Chapters and National leadership.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Commissioner Grinder reminded the UTVA membership that at the last meeting, after roll call, they talked about some organizations being in an inactive status. She read the Articles of Agreement (Section III, Item C.) which pertains to the representation in UTVA and stated that they barely made a quorum today as well as the last meeting. She asked if they would want to consider a change in the Article to read "at least half" of the organizations instead of "8" organizations. In that method, if the number of organizations increases or decreases, we could still have a quorum for a meeting. After some discussion there was a motion and second to change Section III, Item C. to read "at least half" of the organizations instead of "8" organizations. This being the first reading on the change, a second will occur and be voted on at the next UTVA meeting.

### **NEXT MEETING**

Another reminder was made that the next meeting will be March 5, 2013 preceded by lunch. A meeting will follow on June 4, 2013.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

A reminder a Veterans Rally Point will take place on Pearl Harbor Day in Sumner County, in Gallatin, at 9 a.m. on December 7.

### **OTHER REPORTS**

None

### **ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made and seconded for adjournment.



December 21, 2012

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Many-Bears Grinder, Executive Officer  
United Tennessee Veterans Association

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Date